

# ***NEWS***

*From the Office of*

## ***Brad Mitzelfelt***

Supervisor, First District  
San Bernardino County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 28, 2010



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### **Mitzelfelt Applauds Supreme Court for Ruling on Mojave Cross**

SAN BERNARDINO – San Bernardino County First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt today applauded the U.S. Supreme Court for its ruling that the cross which has stood in the Mojave Desert for more than 75 years can remain.

“This is great news for the memory of fallen soldiers and for all who treasure this historical landmark in the Mojave Desert,” said Supervisor Mitzelfelt, in whose district the cross has stood since 1934.

The cross was erected in 1934 in what is now the Mojave National Preserve by Veterans of Foreign Wars who wanted to honor fallen soldiers from World War I. As the cross has fallen into disrepair over the years, it has been rebuilt several times, most recently in 1998.

Because the cross was located on federal land, lower federal courts ordered the cross removed as a violation of the “establishment clause” of the First Amendment. Later, Congress, almost unanimously, passed legislation for a land swap that would place the land on which the cross stands in the private ownership of the VFW. Courts later ruled that Congress’s action was an attempt to thwart their original ruling.

The Supreme Court found that the land swap legislation was a legitimate and legal attempt to resolve a difficult issue.

In his majority opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy poignantly focused on the historical aspect of the cross, writing, “Here, one Latin cross in the desert evokes far more than religion. It evokes thousands of small crosses in foreign fields marking the graves of Americans who fell in battles, battles whose tragedies are compounded if the fallen are forgotten.”

Supervisor Mitzelfelt, a former U.S. Marine, agreed that the simple monument in such a beautiful remote setting is in keeping with the traditions of the American West.

“It is comforting to know that future generations will be able to go to Sunrise Rock and contemplate the cost and meaning of the freedoms we enjoy today,” Supervisor Mitzelfelt said.